

**imagine  
all the  
people**

# Brazilian

*immigrants in Boston*

CITY OF BOSTON  
Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor

*New Bostonian Series*

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## imagine all the people: Brazilian immigrants in Boston

Large-scale migration from Brazil is a relatively recent phenomenon. Indeed, Brazil has historically been a host country for immigrants from many nations. From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, German, Swiss, Italians, Spaniards, Poles, Czechs, Russians, Japanese and others joined the Portuguese in searching for new opportunities in Brazil.

After the military coup of 1964, thousands of Brazilians went into exile. Although most of these exiles returned to Brazil after the amnesty of 1979, the number of economic emigrants grew in the 1980's. According to a Brazilian demographer, José Alberto Magno de Carvalho, Director of the Center of Development and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, there were approximately one to 2.5 million Brazilians living outside Brazil by 1995.<sup>1</sup>



The United States (42%), Paraguay (23%) and Japan (12%), are the main destinations for Brazilian immigrants.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, the U.S. Census counted 212,636 Brazilians living in the United States representing 0.7 percent of the country's foreign-born population of 31 million.<sup>3</sup> During the early years, immigrants from Minas Gerais dominated the immigration flow to the U.S. Now, Goiás, Paraná and Santa Catarina have also become major immigrant exporting regions. Today, at least sixteen Brazilian states contribute to the migration stream.



*one in two  
Brazilians in  
Boston are  
between the  
ages of 20  
and 34*

### population share

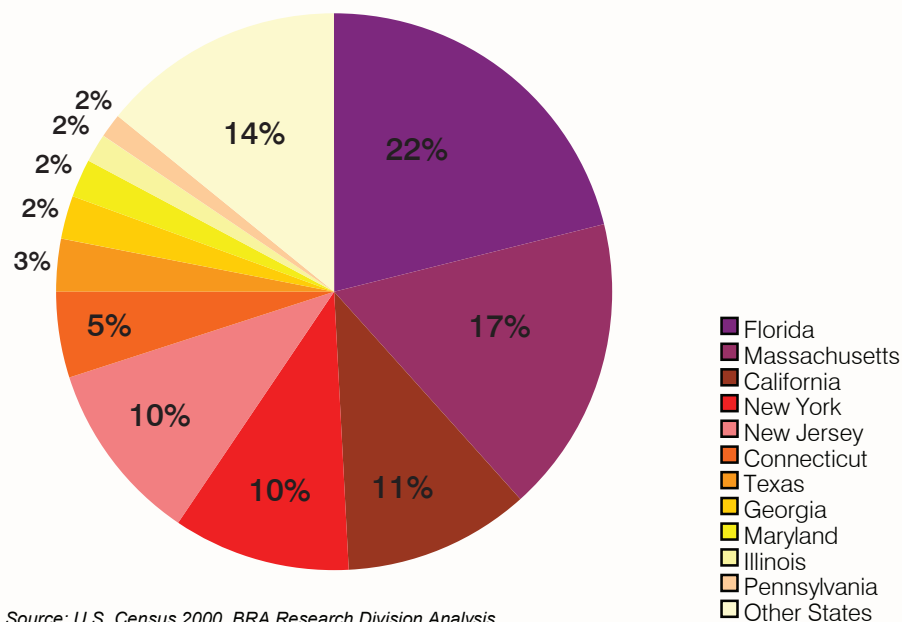
The majority of Brazilian immigrants to the United States live in metropolitan regions. Massachusetts (17%) ranks second to Florida (22%). Other large concentrations of Brazilians include California, (11%), New York (10%) and New Jersey (10%). Combined, these five states constitute 70 percent of the total foreign-born population from Brazil in the United States.

In 2000, 36,669 Brazilians resided in Massachusetts accounting for 4.7 percent of the State's total immigrant population.<sup>4</sup> This share is increasing rapidly and fuelled by the recent inflow of Brazilian immigrants. Between 2000 and 2003, Brazilians made up 19.1 percent of all new immigrants coming to Massachusetts.<sup>5</sup>

Massachusetts is now the primary U.S. destination for Brazilian immigrants (27%) followed by Florida (15%), California (10%) and New York (4%), which is reflected in the fact that Brazilians are now the fastest growing immigrant community in Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup>

Over 7,000 Brazilians live in Boston.<sup>7</sup> Most are male (53%), single (45%), and 50 percent of them are between the ages of 20 and 34—a greater proportion of young adults than in the general population (33%). Fifteen percent of resident Brazilians are U.S. citizens by naturalization.

Share of Brazilian Population by State



## educational attainment

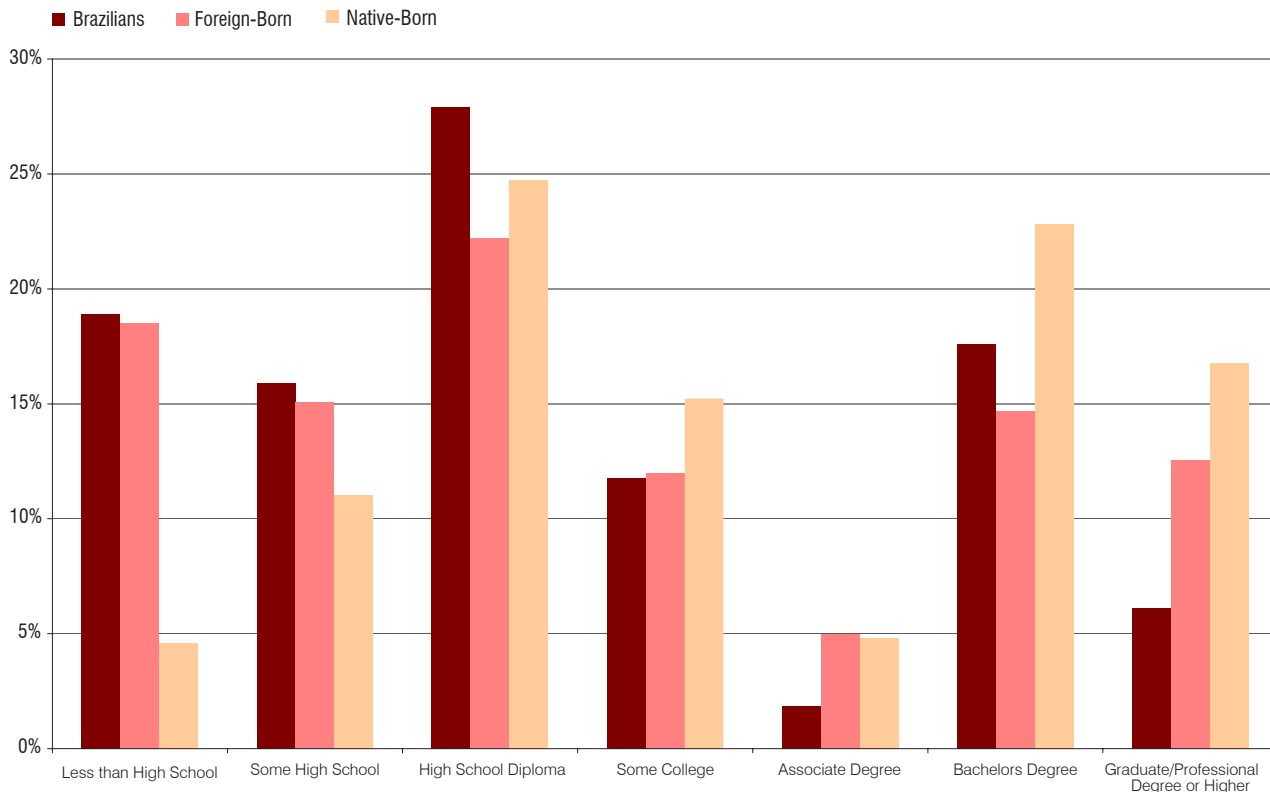
Although many Brazilians living in Boston have not completed high school<sup>8</sup>, Brazilians are more likely to hold a high school diploma (28%) than all native-born (25%) and foreign-born (22%). Eighteen percent have a bachelor's degree compared with 23 percent and 15 percent for native and foreign-born, respectively. And, six percent have a master's degree or higher, a much lower proportion than that of the native-born (17%) and foreign-born (13%) populations.



# imagine

*Brazilians  
are more likely  
to hold a  
high school  
diploma than  
both other  
immigrants and  
the native-born  
population*

**Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Older**



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata (PUM) 5% Sample, BRA Research Division

# occupations

## occupations

Most Brazilians living in Boston are employed in the following occupations: services (43%), technical, sales and administrative support (19%), construction, extraction and transportation (13%), managerial and professional (15%) and production (6%).

Brazilians are over represented in service occupations compared to native (15%) and foreign-born (24%) populations. They are over represented in construction occupations relative to the native-born and foreign-born populations (8% and 10% respectively). And, they are over represented in the arts, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations (4%) relative to both the native (3.6%) and the foreign-born (2%). Brazilians are under represented in all other occupations. They are least represented in managerial and technical occupations.

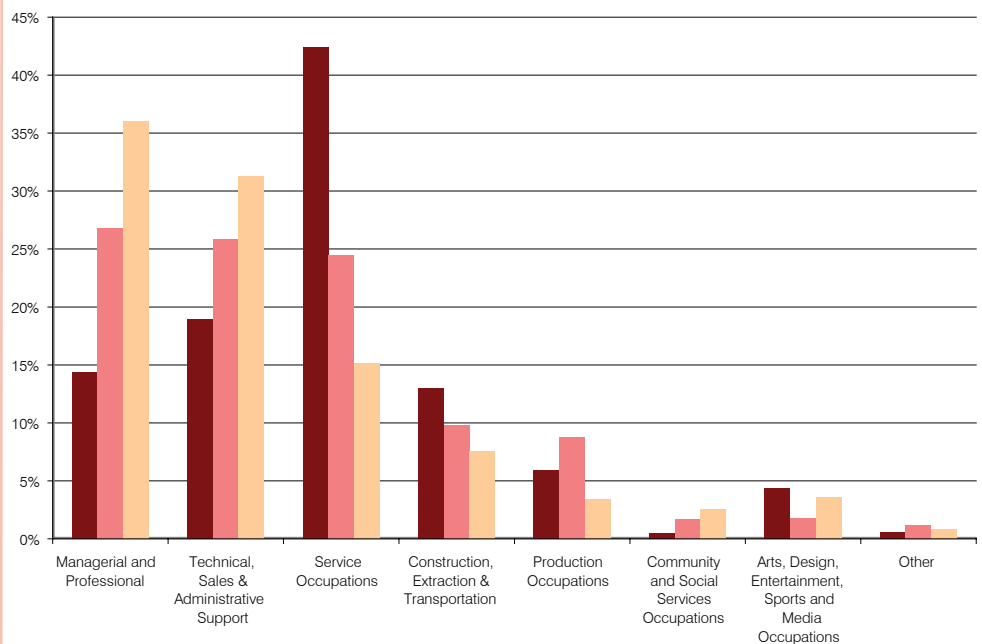
A little over two-thirds of Brazilians in Boston are employed. The labor force participation rate<sup>9</sup> of Brazilians is 75%, compared with 63% for the rest of the population. The unemployment rate among Brazilians is 3% compared to 7.2% citywide.

This high rate of labor force participation and low unemployment rate is not uncommon among immigrants and reflects a common reason for immigrating, namely to secure income through employment.

The majority of Brazilians working in Boston (61%) work for a private for profit company. Another 5% work for a private not for profit organization.

### Occupations for Population 25 Years and Older

■ Brazilians ■ Foreign-Born ■ Native-Born



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata (PUM) 5% Sample, BRA Research





# imagine

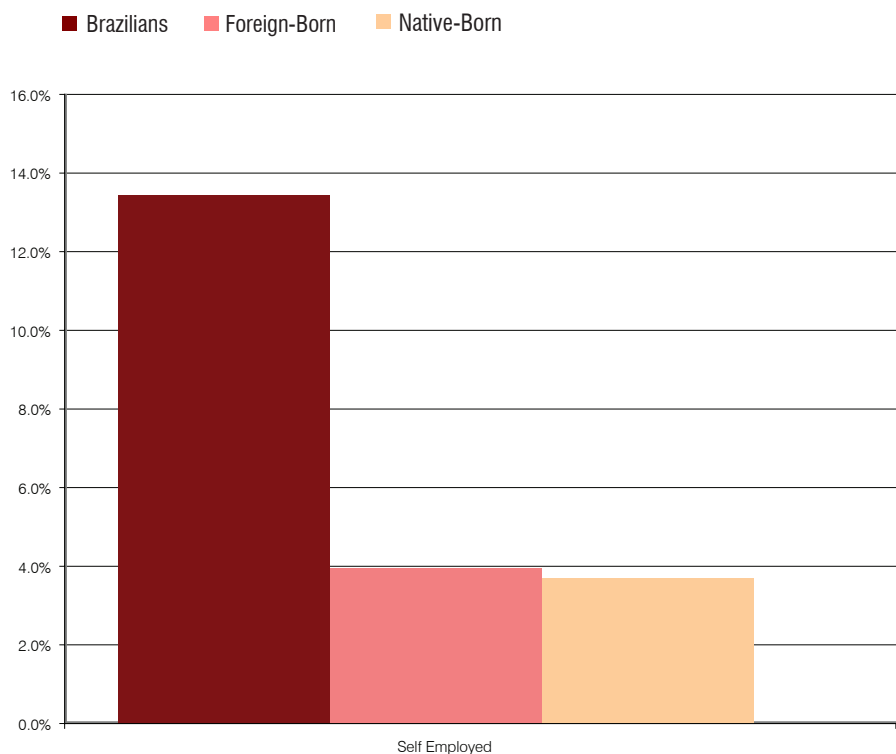
*More than 13%  
of Brazilians are  
self-employed,  
a rate three times  
that of other  
immigrants and  
four times that of  
the native-born  
population*

## self-employed

More than thirteen percent are self-employed; a rate more than three times that of the foreign-born population and almost four times the self-employment rate of the native population.

Such a high self-employment rate may be explained by high rates of financial capital among Brazilians as well as the fact that they emigrated from a country that also has a high self-employment rate.<sup>10</sup>

**Share of Self Employed Workers**



Source: U.S. Census 2000, Public Use Microdata (PUM) 5% Sample, BRA

# imagine

*More than 212,636  
Brazilians live in  
the U.S.*

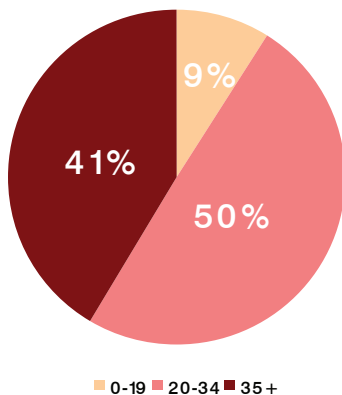
Main destinations for  
Brazilian immigrants:

- **U.S. 42%**
- **Paraguay 23%**
- **Japan 12%**

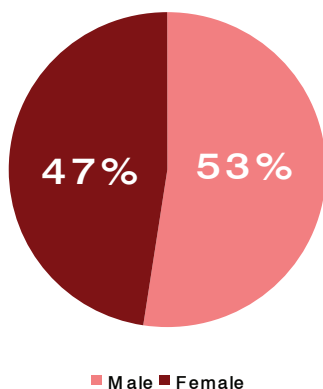
Major Brazilian emigrant regions:

- **Minas Gerais**
- **Goiás**
- **Parana**
- **Santa Catarina**

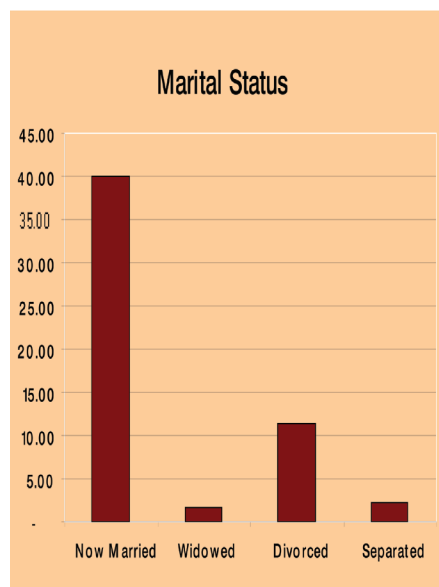
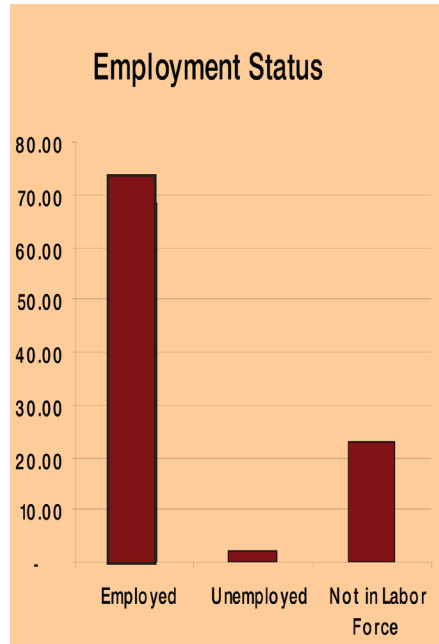
Brazilians by Age



Brazilians by Gender



## 7,173 Brazilians in Boston



### occupations

- 13%** construction, extraction, and transportation
- 43%** services
- 15%** managerial and professional
- 19%** technical, sales and administrative support
- 6%** production
- 4%** arts, design and media

### contributing

**\$132 million**  
annual spending

**\$148 million**  
to the regional product

**\$38 million**  
in state and federal taxes

**1,757 direct and indirect jobs** for the local economy

### entrepreneurship

annual sales

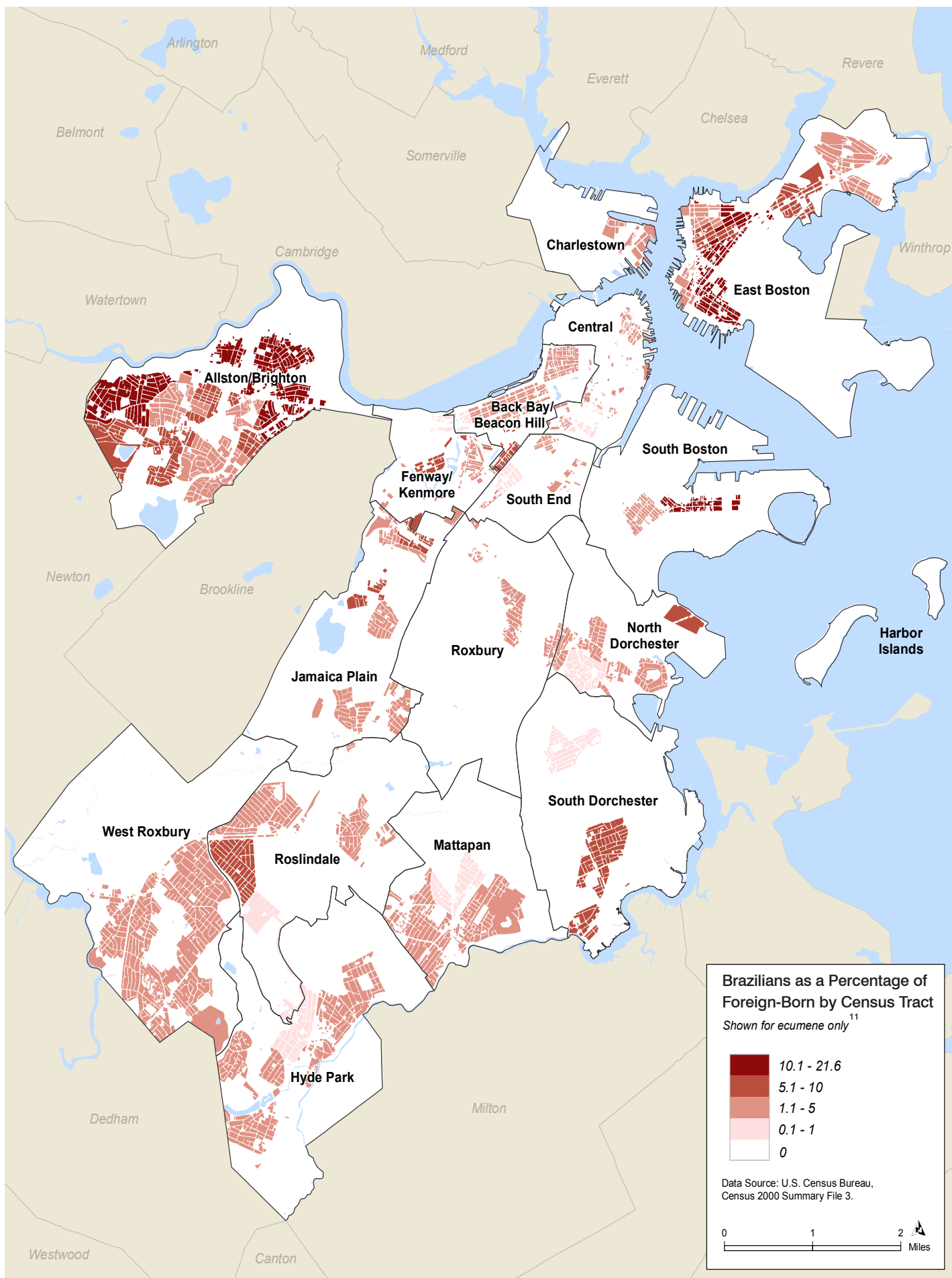
**\$40 million**

business ownership

**150 small businesses**

### homebuying

Brazilians bought  
**3 out of 10 homes**  
sold to immigrants in  
Massachusetts



# contributions

## entrepreneurship

Brazilians contribute to Boston's economy through entrepreneurship. As noted earlier, Brazilians have a very high self-employment rate. They own more than 150 small businesses in the greater Boston area, specializing in restaurants, grocery, travel and insurance among other industry sectors.



Combined, these businesses represent more than \$40 million in annual sales, employ more than 400 people<sup>12</sup> and contribute \$24 million to the regional product, \$2 million in State and Federal taxes<sup>13</sup> and 253 indirect jobs. Collectively, these businesses contribute a total of 653 direct and indirect jobs to the region.

Despite these contributions, only 21% of Brazilians have achieved at best a middle class standard of living<sup>14</sup>, compared to 46% of Boston's native-born population and 28% of all adult foreign-born.

## spending

Brazilian immigrants further contribute to the local economy through their labor as well as through their spending. For example, for every 10 homes sold to immigrants in Massachusetts in 2005, three were purchased by Brazilians making them the largest home buying group, second only to the Chinese.<sup>15</sup>

The total value of their contributions is estimated using a regional economic model (REMI) that calculates the value of goods and services consumed on each dollar spent.

Brazilians spend, from their after tax earnings, nearly \$132 million in Boston, annually.<sup>16</sup> These annual expenditures generate a regional product of \$124 million in local expending and \$36 million in State and Federal taxes.<sup>17</sup> This expenditure in turn, generates 1,104 indirect jobs. in the local economy.<sup>18</sup>

## standard of living

A combination of factors may contribute to Brazilians poor standing. In part, this may reflect the effect of the barriers to opportunity that non-recognition of foreign qualifications presents to Brazilian workers. There is a high rate of low educational levels and English proficiency among Brazilians. For example, while 37.9% of Boston's adult foreign-born population either lacks a high school diploma or has limited English-speaking skills, an already high proportion, rates among adult Brazilians living in Boston are substantially higher at 57.8%.

As the table illustrates, among those with a master's degree or higher, Brazilians have a much lower return on education than both the native-born and the foreign-born populations. This is particularly true for those in professional occupations where official recognition and/or re-certification are needed.

Finally, an important barrier facing immigrants, in general, and Brazilians in particular, is the lack of general knowledge about how local labor markets work.

## civic engagement

Brazilians further contribute to the city's economic and social life through their civic participation. Grassroots organizations such as the Brazilian Women's Group and the Brazilian Immigrant Center are very active and have celebrated their tenth anniversaries this year.

In addition, Brazilian press and media are establishing a permanent presence in the U.S. In the metropolitan Boston area, Brazilians produce fourteen newspapers with a weekly distribution of 20,000 issues and nine monthly magazines with a distribution of 12,000. They also support two of the largest Brazilian television networks transmitting directly from Brazil on a daily basis.<sup>19</sup>

*Collectively,  
Brazilians  
contribute  
\$148 million  
to the economy,  
pay \$38 million  
in taxes, and  
create 1,757 direct  
and indirect jobs*

## Educational Attainment for 20–64 Year Olds in Boston with Middle-Class Standard of Living

Educational Attainment	Native Born	Foreign Born	Brazilians
1–12 years, No Diploma or GED	16%	15%	8%
High School Diploma or GED	31%	22%	16%
13–15 years, No College Degree	38%	24%	30%
Associate's Degree	45%	31%	50%
Bachelor's Degree	59%	43%	47%
Masters or Higher	75%	56%	29%
<b>All</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>21%</b>



# endnotes





1 The Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute registered the statistical “absence” of 1,379,928 Brazilians between the ages of 20 and 44 from the 1991 Brazilian Census, a fact that can only be explained by emigration. Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE) (2000).

2 Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute. (2000).

3 The “foreign-born” population includes all people who are born outside the U.S., naturalized citizens, and non-U.S. citizens. The “native-born” population includes all people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Island Areas and persons born abroad by American parents. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Research Division. (2005).

4 U.S. Census Bureau. (2000).

5 Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). The Changing Face of Massachusetts.

6 Brazilian population estimates vary widely. For example, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that in 2001 there were between 800,000 and 1.1 million Brazilians living in the United States. Cited in Margolis, Maxine L. (2005). Involving the Brazilian Diaspora in Brazilian Studies: Brazilian Immigration to the United States. Department of Anthropology, University of Florida.

7 According to MassInc between 2000 and 2003 Brazilians made up 19.1 percent of all new immigrants to Massachusetts. Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). The Changing Face of Massachusetts.

This represents a 60% increase in the Brazilian population living in Massachusetts. If we apply the same ratio to Boston's Brazilian-born population we have a total Brazilian population in Boston of 7,173.

8 The proportion of Brazilians with less than a high school education (19%), is equal to that of the foreign-born population and much greater than the native-born (5%). U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

9 Defined as the share of the working-age population that is either currently employed or seeking work. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2005).

10 There is no agreement among researchers regarding the reasons for variations in the self-employment rates among different immigrant groups. Reasons cited include human and financial capital of individual immigrants, high rates of solidarity and social capital in some immigrant communities, as well as the opportunity structure encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs.

11 Ecumene: Inhabited Space, from the Greek root *oikos* meaning inhabited and *nenon* meaning space. Census demographic mapping at Boston's Planning and Economic Development agency works at the tract and block group levels. To insure the city's land uses and population distribution are adequately reflected in the maps we make, allowances are made for water bodies, parks, and industrial zones, etc.

The population ecumene is created from the City of Boston Assessing Department parcel boundaries. Land use records from three sources (Assessing Department, Boston Redevelopment Authority, and City of Boston Parks Department) are analyzed to determine which parcels should be included. In some cases parcels are modified to better reflect reality. No new land analysis from aerial photographs or remote sensing data is done. The ecumene intersects both census and block group boundaries resulting in data sets to which census data can be mapped. New area values for the block groups and census tracts are calculated based on the ecumene. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). (2005). Planning Division.

12 Lima, A. (1997) Brazilian Businesses in Greater Boston. Boston: Consulate General of Brazil (Boston)

13 Brazilian-owned businesses generate \$0.426 million in State income taxes, \$0.025 million in State sales taxes paid, and \$1.5 million in Federal income taxes. BRA Research Division. (2005). Regional Economic Model, Inc. REMI calculations.

14 A family income four times the poverty line is used as a proxy for the middle-class standard of living. The actual income needed to achieve this standard depends on the number of people in the family. For a two person family the income would be at least \$44,856 which is at the 43rd percentile of all families. Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth. (2005). The Changing Face of Massachusetts.

15 Moraes, C. (2005). Brazilians Bought 3 out of 10 Homes Sold to Immigrants in Massachusetts. Metropolitan Brazilian News, Edition 242, Year V, 09/30/05 to 10/06/05.

16 Total gross income of Brazilians totaled \$177 million in 2004. Adjustments were made for remittances assuming a monthly transfer of \$342 per household. This amount is in accordance with estimates made by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Marcuss, M. (2005). International Remittances: Information for New England Financial Institutions.

Remittances are another way Brazilians have an economic impact, and in this case, on the Brazilian economy. In 2004, Boston's Brazilians sent back to Brazil \$10.9 million in remittances. Worldwide, in 1995, Brazil received a total of \$2.9 billion in remittances. International Monetary Fund. (2000). Balance of Payments Statistics Yearbook.

17 Brazilians generate \$7.4 million in State income taxes, \$2.1 million in State sales taxes paid, and \$26.6 million in Federal income taxes. Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) Research Division. (2005). (REMI) calculations.

18 BRA Research Division. (2005). REMI calculations.

19 Galvão, H. M. (2002). The Brazilian Community of New England: An Economic Profile.



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Authority

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Map by the Digital Cartography & GIS

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